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T R A N S A C T I O N S

VOLUME XLI

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STAFFORD MILL: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION 2003

MALCOLM HISLOP, ELEANOR RAMSEY AND MARTIN WATTS

with contributions by Erica Macey-Bracken, Stephanie Ratkai and Ian Tyers

SUMMARY

Excavation on the site of Stafford Mill, immediately to the south of the medieval town and close to the River Sow (NGR SK921229) revealed the well-preserved remains of a substantial timber-framed structure. This building comprised at least five phases, of which Phases 1 and 4 were dated by dendrochronology to the late 12th and mid-16th century respectively. The building, which was clearly part of the medieval and later mill, was aligned roughly east–west, along the line of the former mill stream. It was divided into two main elements by a substantial north–south barrier, identified as a head sill. This extended across the entire width of the trench, and was composed of three massive timber balks, one above another, the eastern faces of all three being stepped down towards the east. Inclined beams were tenoned into each side of this structure to form the basis of dependent blocks of framing that sloped away to the east and west. The mill probably housed two wheels. These were originally of the undershot, latterly of the low-breastshot type. The timber-framed structure was jointed almost exclusively with mortices and central tenons, though paired single tenons and barefaced soffit tenons were also found in Phase 3, which has been dated tentatively to the 14th/15th century. An unusual feature was that instead of pegs, most joints, both vertical and horizontal, were secured with wooden wedges. Some timbers bore hewing marks, suggesting that they had been scappled or squared by axe.

INTRODUCTION

In February 2003 Birmingham Archaeology began an archaeological watching brief for Jackson Civil Engineering Co. Ltd, on behalf of the Environment Agency in Mill Bank, Stafford, on the line of a new culvert extending from a landscape pool in Victoria Park to the River Sow through the site of a former mill (Williams 2003). As work progressed a stone wall was uncovered prompting Stafford Borough Council to advise that an archaeological evaluation be undertaken before work on the new culvert resumed. Four trial trenches were excavated along the proposed route of the culvert that extended between two 19th-century waterwheels, preserved from a mill demolished in 1957. In one of the evaluation trenches more of the stone structure was revealed, and stratified beneath it, a number of timber beams. This discovery led to a more extensive excavation which uncovered the well-preserved remains of a multi-phase timber-framed structure, apparently part of an early water-mill. As the work progressed it became clear that the remains were of special archaeological importance, and that the excavation area represented only part of a much more extensive archaeological site. Following English Heritage advice, the decision was taken to preserve the remains *in situ*, rather than to excavate them completely. This report describes the results of this partial excavation.

LOCATION

The town of Stafford is sited on a tongue of Keuper marl and gravel surrounded by alluvium, the historic town centre being almost an island within a loop of the river Sow, which forms the boundary on the south and west, with streams and marshes to the east (VCH 1979, 185). The mill was located on south side of the medieval town (NGR SK921229) immediately south of Mill Bank, a road that follows the projected line of the medieval town walls (Figs 1 and 2).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND *by Martin Watts*

Although the canons of St Mary's church at Stafford had a mill in 1086, its precise location is not known and it may not have been in the town (Morris 1976). The earliest reference to a mill in Stafford is in 1164–5, when one was held of the king for a rent of £1 2s. 6d. a year. The rent was then being remitted in favour of the town bailiff, which may suggest that it had been built only

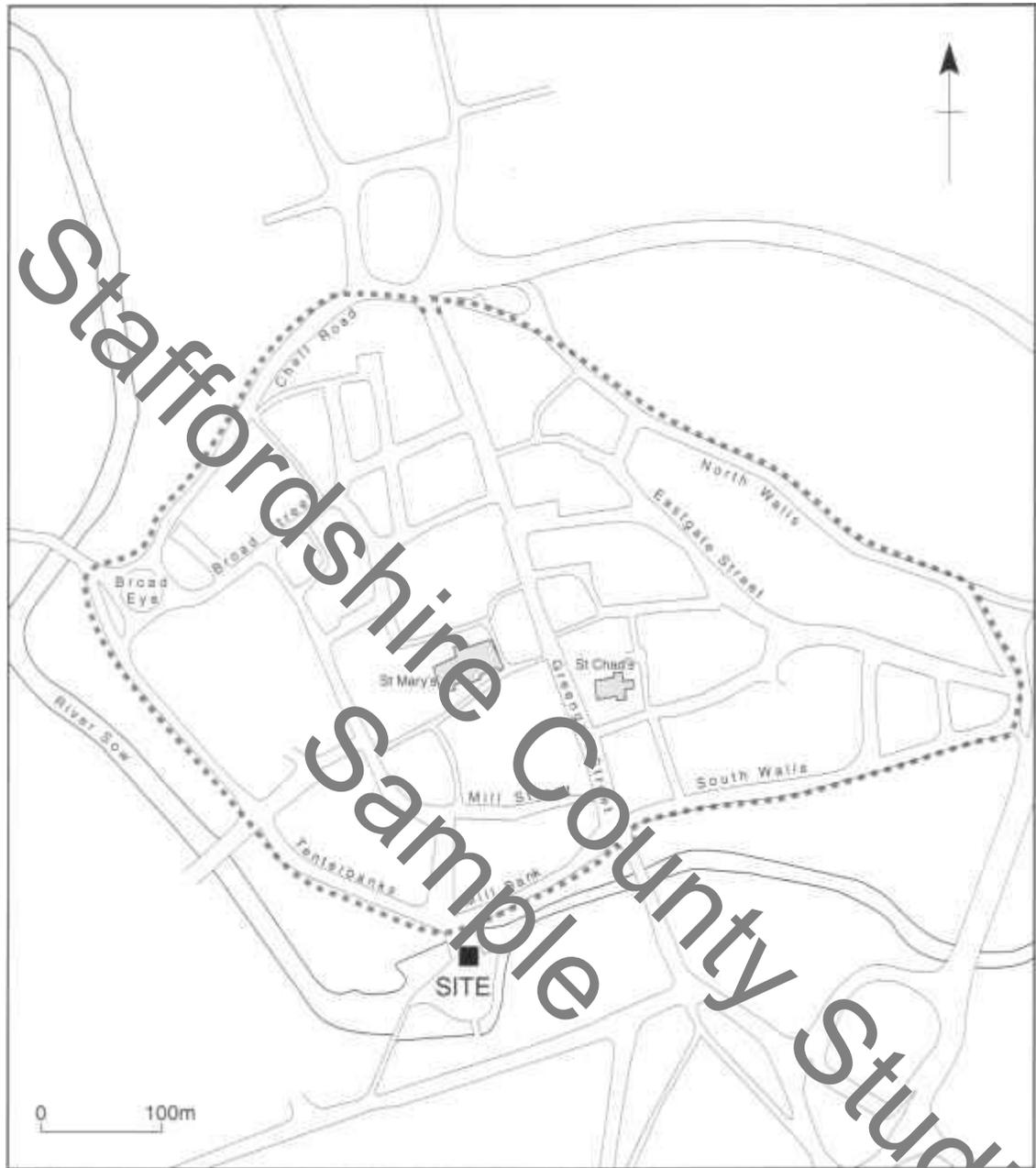


Fig. 1 Location map

recently by the burgesses and was not yet fully operational. By 1166–67 the mill was rendering £2 and from 1168–69 the rent was £2 5s., an increase that presumably indicates its success (SHC I 1880, 39, 41, 46, 52). The king's interest in the mill, however, expired at Easter 1173, when ownership evidently passed to Robert de Stafford, baron of Stafford. In 1193 Robert's heir (his sister's husband, Hervey Bagot) paid the king a fine to inherit the Stafford estate and the money included arrears of rent for Stafford mill, by then worth £6 13s. 4d. a year (*Ibid.* 68; SHC II 1881, 37–8).

In the 1190s Bagot and his wife, Millicent, confirmed William son of Wymer as the lessee of what were then described as the mills (plural) of Stafford, together with pools and the water up to the 'great bridge', presumably that carrying the road south from Stafford over the river Sow a short distance downstream from the mill. William was also granted the right to grind the corn of the tenants at Bradley, the Stafford family's paramount manor some 5 miles (8.5 kms) south-west of Stafford town; the tenants were also required to provide mill-stones and to repair the mill pools. Moreover, the renewed lease included the right to take timber from the wood of 'Grullie' at Bradley for repairs

18th century material from the Bull Ring, Birmingham, and the absence of yellow ware suggests a date after the first decade or so of the 18th century. However, the slipware is unlikely to date much after *c.* 1725 and it is suggested that the pottery in 1007 was deposited about that time.

Similar Cistercian ware to that found in 1044 also occurred in contexts 1034, 1069, and 1091. In the latter context a straight sided two-handled 'corrugated' blackware mug (cf. Barker 1986, Fig 3: 28) and a small, thick-bodied fragment from a Cistercian ware or blackware pedestal ?salt, decorated with whit slip dots, were also found. The upper half of a well-potted Cistercian ware or blackware barrel-shaped mug with rilling on the shoulder (cf. Ford 1995, Fig 22: 204) was found in (1114).

Although the assemblage was small, it nevertheless produced a good collection of late 15th to early 17th century pottery, which provides useful comparanda for southern and central Staffordshire.

METAL WORK *by Erica Macey-Bracken (Fig. 19)*

PINS

A total of 193 metal pins was recovered from the site. Almost all of the pins were complete, although in most cases they were covered with corrosion products. The assemblage was quantified by count, and examined macroscopically for the purposes of this report. The pins were concentrated in two layers of the site (128 in Context 1002 and 64 in Context 1091), with a further pin coming from an unstratified wall fill. This concentration suggests that the pins were lost in two distinct episodes, rather than being discarded over a long period of time.

Most of the pins were around the same size, with a range of 21mm–44mm noted across both of the contexts that yielded the pins. Only two pins outside of this range were noted, at 55mm (1002) and 60mm (1091). The majority of the complete pins also had rounded heads. The largest pin (1091) had a large rounded head, and may possibly have been used for more decorative purposes than the rest of the pins in the group.

The pins that were not completely covered by corrosion products had a golden appearance, suggesting that they were made of tinned brass. High quality pins began to be made in this metal in England in the 17th century (Costello, 2001), and as the contexts from which the pins were recovered also contain pottery dated to the 17th century (Ratkai, above), it is not unreasonable to suggest that this is the case.

THIMBLE

A small copper-alloy thimble was recovered from a layer of sandy silt clay rubble fill (1007). The thimble was complete, although it had been crushed on one edge of its base. A small pebble

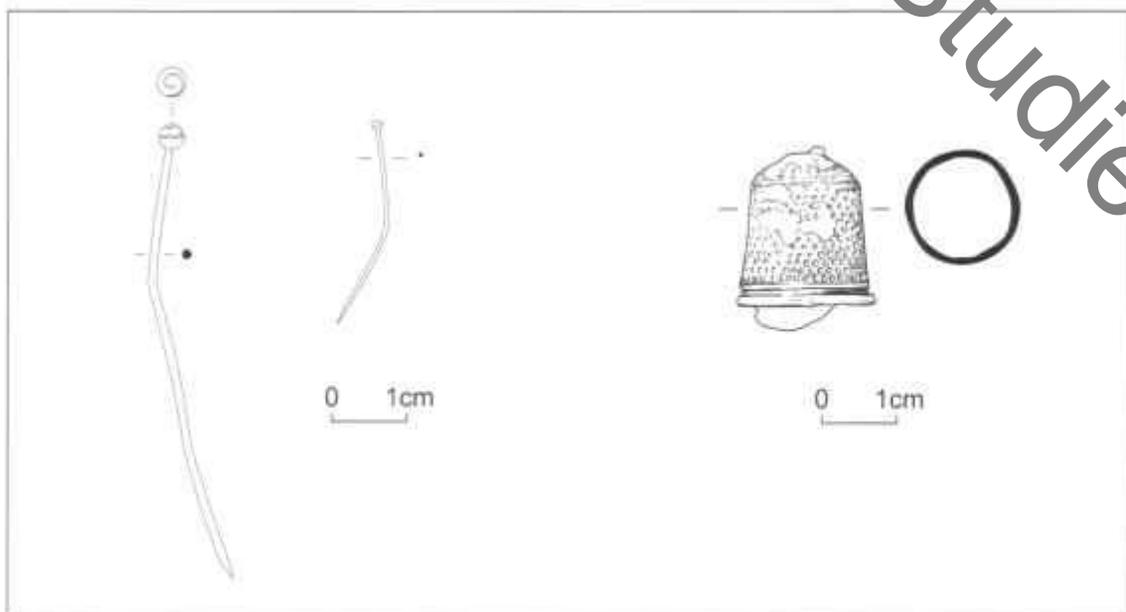


Fig. 19 Metalwork

was jammed into the inside of the thimble, trapped by the crushed edge. The thimble was quite small, at 19mm high, with a diameter of 17mm at its mouth. No decoration was noted beyond the customary pattern of indentations (or pounce marks) on the crown and sides. A narrow plain lip and band, with a combined width of 3mm, was visible at the base of the thimble.

The thimble was recovered from a layer that also yielded pottery dating to the early 18th century (Ratkai, above), so it is reasonable to assume that the thimble is of a similar date. Decorative thimbles were often given as tokens of affection at this time, although this plain example seems more likely to be a utilitarian piece, possibly bought from one of the salesmen who sold toys – small household items such as needlework equipment – like the London toy seller with a stock of ‘steel tops and other thimbles’ who is listed as living ‘at the Green Parrot near Chancery Lane’ in 1762 (Rath, 1779, 41). The West Midlands was a major centre of the toy manufacturing industry in the 18th century and thimble mills are known to have existed in Nechells, Birmingham by 1758 (VCH 1964, 259–60) and Smethwick, Staffordshire by 1775 (VCH 1967, 269). It is probable that the Stafford example came from a comparatively local manufactory like one of these.

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Plate 1 The site from the east, Photos 1-5



Plate 2 F171 and F172 from the north

BILSTON: THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF A WEST MIDLANDS COMMUNITY

MALCOLM HISLOP

with contributions by S. Blake, R. Cuttler, M. Duncan, R. Lee, E. Macey, K. Nichol, and A. Rudge

SUMMARY

The following report summarises the results of three development-led excavations carried out in 2002 in Bilston, Wolverhampton, West Midlands. These investigations have added to our knowledge of the town's development and given an insight into its archaeological potential. Despite the intensive 19th-century development of Bilston, the results of these projects highlight the potential for earlier remains to survive. To the rear of a property in Bridge Street a possible medieval beam slot was recorded, and at Market Way residual 12th–13th-century pottery was recovered. At two sites along the principal medieval thoroughfare (High Street and Bridge Street) possible buried soil layers of post-medieval date may constitute evidence for a contraction of the settlement and the abandonment of previously occupied plots. At 1–3 High Street this hiatus appears to date from c. AD 1500 to the early 18th century, whereas at Bridge Street we have dating evidence from the 17th century only. By the early 19th century both these plots had been occupied by buildings again.

INTRODUCTION

Situated approximately 2½ miles south east of Wolverhampton, but within the city boundaries, Bilston is a small industrial town of early medieval origins, once in Staffordshire, but now an inextricable component of the West Midlands conurbation (fig. 1). In common with many West Midland communities, the archaeology of Bilston is little known, and fieldwork has been limited, but in 2002 Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (now Birmingham Archaeology) carried out a series of development-led archaeological projects within the historic core of the town, which have thrown some light upon its development (fig. 2). The results are described in this report.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The origins of Bilston are obscure, though the name is Old English and is thought to refer to the settlement of the Bilsaetan, the Anglian people that inhabited this part of the kingdom of Mercia (Watts 2004). There is no mention of such a folk in the Tribal Hidage, and it is probable that by the time the document was drawn up the Bilsaetan had been assimilated into the Mercian confederation and were no longer considered to be a distinct tribal group.

Bilston is first mentioned in a charter of Æthelred II dating from 985, which records a grant of land to the Lady Wulfrun (Sawyer 1968, no. 860), and it may have formed part of an early Anglo-Saxon royal estate centred on Wolverhampton (Hooke and Slater 1986, 25). A second charter, the text of which is said to date from 994, records Wulfrun's endowment of the monastery at Wolverhampton, and describes the boundaries of the vill (VCH III, 321; Sawyer 1968, no. 1380).

In 1086, when Bilston was recorded in the Domesday Book as belonging to the king, the settlement contained eight *villani* and three bordars. It has been estimated from these figures that the village supported about eleven households and a population of between fifty and one hundred (Brereton 1996, 3).

Bilston remained with the Crown, as part of Stowheath Manor, until 1265. During the reign of Edward III all Bilston men were granted freedom from tolls as a consequence of the vill having formerly been a demesne of the crown, though there is no evidence that a market was held here subsequently (Lawley 1893, 21). By 1378 there was a priest at Bilston (*Ibid.*), suggesting that a church was in existence by this time, and this was certainly so by 1452/8 when Sir Thomas Erdington founded a chantry chapel in the church of St Leonard at Bilston (Lawley 1893).

Industrial activity began early. There is reference to coal being mined at neighbouring Sedgley from the 13th century onwards, and at Bilston itself by 1401 (VCH II, 72). An association with the metal industries had already been formed by the 16th and 17th centuries, by which time Bilston had become known for the manufacture of locks, keys, and grindstones, and as the source of a

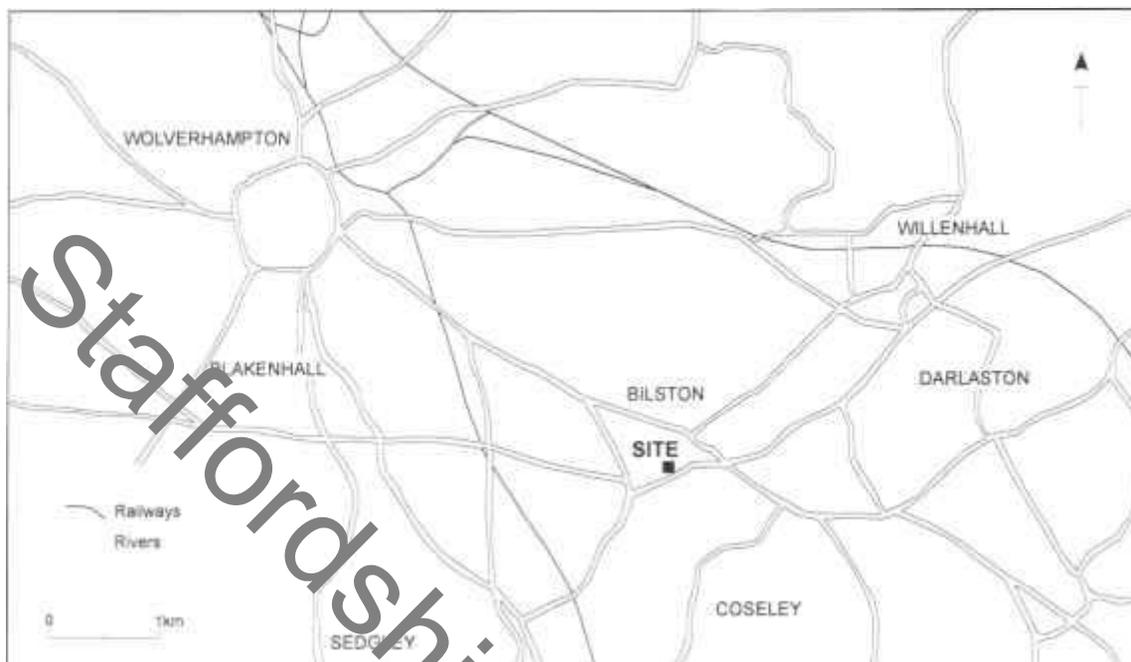


Fig. 1 Site Location

particularly fine sand used in metal casting (Collins 1991, 8–9). In 1756 John Wilkinson came to Bilston and opened an ironworks at Bradley, approximately 3/4 mile to the south of the town. Coal mining increased dramatically in scale toward the end of the 18th century. Thereafter, the industrialisation of the town proceeded apace, and the number of inhabitants increased from 3,875 in 1771 to 24,188 in 1851 (Collins 1991). This rapid expansion of Bilston and the consequent overcrowded and insanitary living conditions that accompanied the population increase contributed to an outbreak of cholera in 1832 resulting in 741 deaths (Price 1840). The consequence of this catastrophe was the Bilston Improvement Act of 1850 which established a body of Commissioners and a Local Board of Health for the purpose of paving, lighting, watering, cleansing, sewerage, and otherwise improving the town.

THE TOWN PLAN

The early layout of Bilston can be appreciated from a map of 1832 (fig.2). At that date the village was approached from the west along a turnpike road (now the A4039), being joined from the north-west by the Wolverhampton road (now Wolverhampton Street) at the western edge of the settlement. From here, the main village thoroughfare followed the route taken today by High Street and Church Street with the church of St Leonard at the east end of Church Street on its north side.

The area around the church may have been the centre of the medieval village. The church stood at a fork in the road, one branch turning south-east into what is now Bridge Street, and then south before crossing Bilston Brook on the way to Wednesbury. To the south of the church, the Walsall road (Walsall Street) branched off at a sharp angle to the north-west before turning abruptly north-east to cross Lichfield Street on the way to Willenhall. This sharp turn gives the impression of being a later interpolation, and the probability that the Walsall Road was originally a straightforward continuation of the High Street can be readily surmised. Here, the former line of the road is suggested by the alignment of properties to the north-east of Green Croft, an alignment that is also evident to the south-west of Green Croft on the 1887 map (fig. 3). The lower end of Walsall Street no doubt has its origins as a short cut between the Walsall and Wednesbury roads. On the north side of the church was a second link (now Lichfield Street) between the two routes.

The junction of High Street and Church Street formed a crossroads with what in 1832 was Middlefield Lane (now Broad Street) to the north-west and Pinfold Street to the south-east. Extending north-east and south-west from the end of Pinfold Street roughly parallel with High Street/Church Street, Market Street and its north-eastern continuation, Hall Street, were already in existence. It is possible that this arrangement represents an early example of town planning. Certainly, at least two

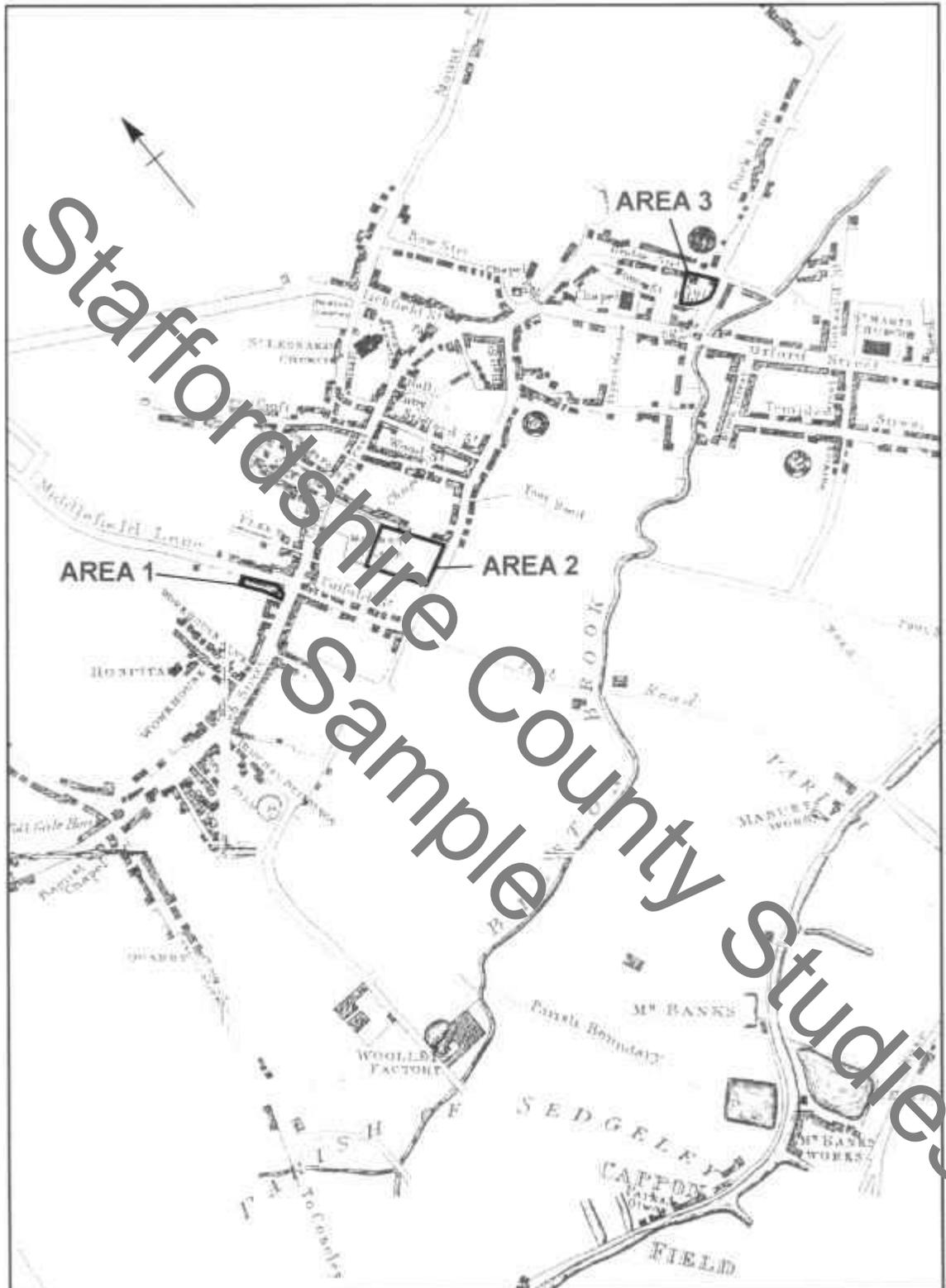


Fig. 2 Bilston in 1832 showing location of archaeological sites

of the fifteen customary tenements recorded by the Reverend Richard Ames between 1684 and 1730 were situated in this area (Hume's Tenement on the north-west side of Hall Street, and Robin's Tenement on the north-west side of Market Street) (Lawley 1893, 47–8). A number of properties along High Street and Church Street have the long and narrow shape characteristic of some medieval plots, though there is, as yet, no archaeological evidence to support or refute such an identification.

In 1809 the village was bypassed, and the High Street/ Church Street/ Bridge Street road superseded as the main route between Wednesbury and Wolverhampton by the construction of New Road at the north-east end of the settlement and its continuation Oxford Street; the two sections were linked by the older Lichfield Street. By 1832 a number of streets had been established to the south of Oxford Street, and when the 1st edition of the Ordnance Survey map appeared in 1887 the town had expanded far beyond its early nucleus (fig. 4).

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SITES

The archaeological work was undertaken in three main areas, all of which lay along the main medieval thoroughfare (fig. 2).

- Area 1: 1–3 High Street
- Area 2: Market Way
- Area 3: Broad Street/Queen Street

Area 1: 1–3 High Street (NGR SO 9477 9632)

Area 1 was situated at the east end of the High Street, at its junction with Broad Street, which forms its north-eastern boundary. It comprised a long narrow plot (approximately 35m x 10m) aligned north-west–south-east, with its south-east end fronting the High Street. The site appears to have been occupied by buildings since 1812 at the latest, but the earliest map detailed enough to distinguish something of the character of individual buildings is that of 1832 which shows an L-shaped building fronting the High Street with a short south-west wing set back from the road to accommodate a small forecourt (fig. 2). To the rear of this structure, extending along the side of Middlefield Lane (now Broad Street), was a long narrow range. The first accurate depiction of the plot is on the 1st edition of the Ordnance Survey map of 1887, which shows the L-shaped block, the south-west arm of which had been extended along the High Street and divided into four properties all fronting onto the High Street (fig. 3). To the rear there was again a long range along the Broad Street frontage. This arrangement survived at least until 1918 (fig. 5) but by 1938 the buildings had been demolished (fig. 6). It had been reoccupied by 1965, but was cleared of structures again in 1993.

Area 2: Market Way (NGR SO 9490 9630)

Market Way was a route of recent origin leading south-east from Church Street through the area of the former market place. The market was probably established on this site as a result of the Market Act passed in 1824, which allowed the establishment of a large market place in which markets could be held every Monday and Saturday. Certainly, the name Market Place first appears in the cartographic record in 1832 for a rectangular plot, narrowed at the north-west end, where it joined Church Street, apparently to accommodate a series of buildings to the south-west that may have been associated with the back plots of the Church Street properties. Vine Street was also in existence by this time with ranges of buildings along its north-eastern side overlooking the market place. Market Place itself was divided into eastern and western plots, a division that survived almost unaltered until the redevelopment of the site in the 1970s.

By 1839 four long rectangular structures had been built in the western half of the market place, though the eastern plot remained undeveloped, and to the south and south-east of the site was a large field, which by 1887 was occupied by Bilston Foundry, an iron and brass manufactory (fig. 3). By this date too, the area to the south-west of the market was built up with terraced houses and St Luke's church and vicarage. Bilston Market Hall, which was built on the north-western part of the site in 1892, appears on the 1902 Ordnance Survey map (fig. 4). It was demolished in the 1960s/early 1970s along with many other old buildings in the vicinity, preliminary to the construction of a new shopping centre.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was 12m long x 3.5m wide and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.3m below the existing ground surface (131.45m AOD).

The earliest stratigraphic feature (F108) was linear in character and aligned north-west–south-east, parallel to Bridge Street. Only a 1m length of this 0.6m wide feature was revealed, it had a U-shaped profile with relatively steep sides. A lump of ferrous material was retrieved from the fill, but no specific dating evidence.

Both F108 and the natural subsoil were sealed by an extensive compact grey-brown clay and silt layer (1013) 0.15m deep. It was cut by a sub-circular pit (F106), 0.75m in diameter and 0.30m deep with a U-shaped profile, and by a 0.7m wide x 0.2m deep U-shaped linear feature (F101), filled with black rubble and grey silt (1010), aligned north-east–south-west along the middle of the trench. Overlying 1010 was set a layer of squared sandstone blocks (1005), 0.25m high and 0.2m wide, cut on its north-western side by a brick-built culvert (F105).

None of these contexts contained dating evidence but they were sealed by a 0.45m deep compact green-grey clay and silt layer, containing a concentration of coal inclusions towards the north-eastern end of the trench (1002), from which 17th-century pottery was retrieved (S. Rátkai pers comm).

1002 was sealed by another clay and silt layer with building rubble and coal inclusions (1000). Cutting this layer were several truncated brick walls of 19th-century date that in turn were sealed beneath a more recent layer (1001) of friable brown sand with a capping of recent debris.

Discussion

Potentially the most interesting piece of archaeological evidence revealed by Trench 1 is the linear feature F108 that was cut into the natural subsoil. It is possible that the layer sealing this feature (1013) and the subsoil was the remains of a buried topsoil. As this layer was in turn sealed by a buried 17th-century layer (1002, possibly buried garden soil, it is probable that F108 was medieval or, at the latest, early post-medieval in date. Because F108 was aligned with Bridge Street, it probably represents the rear wall of an early, probably timber framed structure that fronted the street. The slot was occupied either by a stone pith that has since been robbed, or by a timber sill. In either case the evidence would suggest a date of later than c. 1200, by which time the sill beam was in use in the West Midlands (Hislop, Ramsey and Watts 2005). It is possible, therefore, that occupation extended along Bridge Street as far as this site during the Middle Ages, but subsequently contracted only to be re-established in the 17th or 18th centuries.

Cutting 1013, but sealed by the possible 17th-century garden soil (1002), the linear feature (F101) aligned perpendicular to the Bridge Street frontage would appear to be a post-medieval property boundary. It is possible that F101 represents the re-colonisation of this part of Bridge Street after abandonment in the medieval period. The sandstone foundation (1005) was built over and on the same alignment as F101. It is contemporary with the 17th-century garden soil (1002), and, given its poor quality build, may represent a property boundary within the gardens, rather than a more substantial structure. It is also possible that these stones were reused from an earlier building as they shared the same bedding depth of 0.23m (9 ins).

Trench 2

Trench 2 was 15m long and was excavated to a maximum depth of 3.5m below the existing ground surface (129.14m AOD).

A 4m x 0.5m sondage within the trench was excavated down to a horizon of compact yellow clay (2005) that sloped dramatically from 131m AOD (east) down to 129m AOD (west). Above it was a layer of friable black cinders and rubble (2002), with a maximum depth of 2.88m, into which was cut a series of truncated brick walls, mostly 19th century in date. Sealing these walls and Context 2002 was a late 20th-century brick and masonry rubble layer (2001) which was present over the entire area of the trench.

Trench 2 revealed over 2m of 19th-century and later infill along the frontage of Stone Street, suggesting that there may have been a quarry, natural depression, or slope on this side, although today the land is relatively level.

Trench 3

Owing to difficulties of machine access Trench 3 was excavated in a rhomboidal shape, approx-

imately 6m long x 4m wide and to a maximum depth of 1.4m below the existing ground level (130.83m AOD).

The earliest stratigraphic feature in Trench 3 was part of a stone structure (F300) that was revealed in the south-east corner of the excavated area. The walls of this building were approximately 0.5m thick, survived to a height of 0.95m, and were faced with large squared sandstone blocks. Abutting the structure to the north (F300) was a series of 19th-century brick walls (F301 and F302), and to the west a brick yard surface (3010). The interior was filled by several layers of building rubble (3001–3007) mixed with coal and cinders, which produced substantial amounts of slag and crucible material. Above these features and contexts were layers of building rubble and topsoil.

The stone structure (F300) is roughly in the right position to be identified with the pinfold that first appeared in the cartographic record in 1832, and that survived as a property division into the 20th century. Certainly the structure pre-dated the 19th-century walls that abutted it, and it is possible that the latter represent the building that was extended to enclose the pinfold on the north side.

CONCLUSIONS

These three excavations have thrown some light on the development of Bilston and given an insight into the archaeological potential of the town. Archaeological evidence for the early settlement has generally proved elusive. However, the putative beam slot to the rear of the Bridge Street property suggests that medieval archaeology might survive in the town. The discovery on the two sites along the main street (1–3 High Street and Bridge Street) of possible buried soil layers of post-medieval date may provide evidence for a contraction of the settlement and the abandonment of previously occupied plots. At 1–3 High Street this hiatus appears to date from c. AD 1500 to the early 18th century, whereas at Broad Street we have dating evidence from the 17th century only. By the early 19th century both these plots had been occupied by buildings again.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1–3 High Street Evaluation

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1–3 High Street Watching Brief

Thanks are also due to Wayne Simpson and his team for their support and assistance on site. Specialist identification of the pottery was undertaken by Stephanie Rátkai. The watching brief was carried out by Melissa Conway, and by Erica Macey who prepared the archive report, which was edited by Kirsty Nichol who also managed the project for BUFAU.

Market Way

The evaluation fieldwork was undertaken by Chris Hewitson, Andy Rudge, Richard Cuttler, and Steve Graham. Andy Rudge and Suzy Blake supervised the excavation assisted by Steve Williams and Phil Mann. The illustrations were prepared by John Halsted. Mike Shaw, the Black Country Planning Archaeologist, monitored the excavations on behalf of Wolverhampton City Council. Thanks to Rex Davidson from Wolverhampton City Council Property Services for his help throughout the project.

Queen Street/Bridge Street

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NEEDWOOD FOREST AND CELTIC PHILOLOGY

ANDREW BREEZE

Needwood Forest (SK 1624) is in east Staffordshire, some four miles west of Burton-upon-Trent. Recorded between 1198 and 1248 as *Nedwode*, in about 1265 as *Neydwode*, and in 1540 as *Needwood*, it has been explained from English *need* and *wood* as ‘need wood, wood of distress or poverty’, possibly because it was ‘resorted to in need as a refuge by robbers’. This feeble explanation, for which no parallel is cited, has been repeated for generations by English place-name scholars.¹

Fortunately, it has been doubted by Dr Nigel Tringham of the Staffordshire Victoria County History. He not only thought it weak, but knew that many English forest-names are of Celtic origin. In the midlands, we thus have Wrekin, Morfe, Kinver, and Cannock; in the south are Braden, Saver-nake, Chute, and Melchett (the last of these, given the existence of Welsh *mil* ‘animal’, probable points to a meaning ‘game wood, wood of wildlife’ and not ‘bald-headed wood’).² He thus asked the present writer if the element *Need-* might also be Celtic. Hence this note, which would never have been written but for Dr Tringham.

Need- at first appears unlikely as a Celtic wood-name. Yet a little thought offers an explanation that is unexpected but seems compelling. Evidence for it comes from three sources. First is the river Neath of Glamorgan. This is known from the Antonine Itinerary, which gives British-Latin *Nidum* as the name of the Roman fort there (Two of its gates survive, in a housing estate on the edge of Neath town.) The second is Neden Brook near Caerwent (ST 4690) in Monmouthshire. Third is the river Nidd of North Yorkshire, flowing some thirty-five miles past Knaresborough to join the Ouse near York. The writer has pointed out that the Neath, Neden Brook, and Nidd all cross limestone areas and disappear underground. They can thus all be explained as meaning ‘dropper’ from the root **ni-* ‘down’ found in English *nether* and Sanskrit *nīṭaram* ‘further down’. This suggestion is not new. It was made for the Nidd by Eugene Aram (1704–59), murderer and pioneer philologist, who was born in Nidderdale and knew the river well. It is, however, ignored by Dr Graham Isaac of Galway (who describes *Nidum* as an obscure Celtic form perhaps meaning ‘flowing’; an explanation that may be dismissed).³ If, therefore, Needwood were also a region of vanishing streams, it would provide a fourth instance of this Celtic form, confirming *Need-* as of British origin and not English at all.

At this point we turn to ordnance survey maps. We there soon find streams in Needwood Forest that end in nothing. Their nature has been made clear to the writer by Dr Tringham, who consulted the British Geological Survey and passed on large-scale maps and aerial photographs supplied by them. One such swallow-hole (at SK 186245) occurs on the east side of the forest, north-east of New Inn Farm at a hamlet called Needwood (though the settlement itself is modern, as Dr Tringham points out). There is another (at SK 185224) to the south at Rangemore, where the valley south-east of the village is streamless. Yet why should streams be swallowed up in this way? Dr Tringham again comes to the rescue with an article provided by the Geological Survey, which mentions ‘wash-holes’ or swallow-holes in gypsum layers near Tutbury, north-east of the forest.⁴

Gypsum is soluble. It allegedly gives flavour to the water of Burton-upon-Trent, fostering its brewing industry. (So gypsum helps answer Housman’s query, ‘Say, for what were hop-yards meant, / Or why was Burton built on Trent?’) Since Needwood Forest is located on marls with layers of gypsum, it cannot be doubted that the streams by Needwood hamlet and Rangemore sink below ground when they flow onto gypsum deposits. On this basis, we may deduce that one or more of the brooks in the forest (which now have English names) were known to the Britons as **Nida* ‘one that drops’ (where the asterisk shows a reconstructed term, not surviving in writing), and were namesakes of the Neath of Glamorgan, the Nidd of Yorkshire, and so on.

1 *The Cambridge Dictionary of English Place-Names*, ed. V. E. Watts (Cambridge, 2004), 430.

2 A. L. Poole, *From Domesday Book to Magna Carta*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1955), 28; Richard Coates and Andrew Breeze, *Celtic Voices, English Places* (Stamford, 2000), 302, 334, 339.

3 A. C. Breeze, ‘The Names of Yorkshire’s Cray Beck, River Balder, and River Nidd’, *Transactions of the Yorkshire Dialect Society*, XIX/100 (2000), 27–33; G. R. Isaac, *Place-Names in Ptolemy’s Geography* (CD-ROM, Aberystwyth, 2004). Cf. now Patrick Sims-Williams, *Ancient Celtic Place-Names in Europe and Asia Minor* (Oxford, 2006), 183.

4 T. Trafford Wynne, ‘Gypsum, and its Occurrence in the Dove Valley’, *Transactions of the Institute of Mining Engineering*, XXXII (1907), 171–92, at 189, 191–2.

Why, however, do we have Needwood Forest and not 'Nidwood'? The explanation lies in sound-changes of the British language in the fifth and sixth centuries, when the Anglo-Saxons were moving westwards across Britain. In the earlier fifth century the long *a* (later lost) of British **Nida* would have changed the preceding *i* to *e*. But this development (which linguists call *a*-affection) did not occur for the Yorkshire Nidd because the original British form there was **Nidos*, a masculine. When the Northumbrians reached York in the later fifth century, they learned a name that gives modern *Nidd*; but Mercians on the Upper Trent in the middle of the fifth century heard Celtic **Neda* for their river. But there are two problems. First, since the vowel of Welsh *Nedd* (Neath) is short, we should expect 'Nedwood' and not 'Needwood'. How do we get round this? The anonymous referee of this note, who pointed out this difficulty, also provided a solution, or solutions. Since early English spellings suggest the *e* may have been short, it may be that pronunciation with long *e* from the 16th century (as due to folk-etymology, that is, association with 'need'). Against this is a spelling *Neidwode* of the 1120s, which points to a long vowel.⁵ So alternatively and more probable, the referee thinks the *e* may actually have been a long one, borrowing the long *e* of the new Brittonic quantity system which came into existence about 600. That would give the 'ee' of Modern English following the Great Vowel Shift of the 15th century. The second problem is simpler. Lenition of British *d* is dated to the later fifth century (as in Welsh *Nedd* 'Neath', with the *th* sound of English *breathe*). Why do Needwood and the Yorkshire Nidd not show this? The referee points out that this is due to sound-substitution by Old English, which lacked voiced *th*.⁶ Hence the *d* of present-day *Needwood*.

If this above explanation is correct, it has four implications. It shows Needwood has a name going back to pre-English times; we can reject outright the idea of the wood as 'resorted to in need as a refuge by robbers'. The borrowing of Celtic **Neda* (from **Nida* 'Dropper') by English also indicates British survival around the Trent when the Anglo-Saxons came to Repton, Tamworth, and Lichfield in the middle of the sixth century. Further, since the Celts revered water and attributed divine powers to rivers and lakes, the disappearing streams of Needwood may have been worshipped with awe. Their swallow-holes might thus offer finds for archaeologists. Finally, these humble Staffordshire streams may help with the names of greater rivers, including the Nidda, which meets the Main downstream from Frankfurt, and the Nied, which rises in France and flows into Germany to meet the Saar below Saarlouis. These Continental rivers likewise run across soluble rocks, and may similarly have been known as 'dropper', referring to a flow of water that inexplicably vanishes below ground.

5 British Library, Add. Charter 27313; for an edited text see Geoffrey of Burton, *Life and Miracles of St Modwenna*, ed. R. Bartlett (Oxford, 2002), p. liv.

6 K. H. Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (Edinburgh, 1953), 208–9, 342–4, 558, 573–8, 560–1.

MARIAN HERETICS AT LICHFIELD

JIM GOULD

During the middle ages, the teaching of John Wycliffe and his followers (the Lollards) alarmed many who feared for the fabric of both church and society. Lollards and any persons holding somewhat similar views were considered to be heretics and were savagely (but legally) suppressed by Henry IV under the 1411 statute, *De Heretico Comburendo*: once determined by the church authorities to be heretics, they were handed over to the secular arm and burnt.

Heresy again came to the fore in the late 15th and the 16th centuries. In Coventry and Lichfield diocese Bishop John Hals (1459–90) and Bishop Geoffrey Blythe (1503–31) used their visitations to seek out heretics, and from 1512 Blythe also headed a royal commission to inquire into insurrections, rebellions, and Lollards in south Wales and the Marches. A transcript of Blythe's register and court book for 1511–12 has recently been published,¹ and most of the 158 alleged heretics recorded there came from Coventry and Birmingham; none came from Lichfield and none was burnt there. Exceptionally, John the Herde of Bolton-on-the Moors (Lancs.) was interrogated in Lichfield cathedral by the dean, John Cotton, acting as the bishop's vicar general, but he was persuaded to abjure his beliefs and was absolved.² Most commissions sought to obtain such abjurations and so avoid compulsory live burnings, although a public penance was usually imposed. There were very few burnings nationally during the protestant reign of Edward VI (1547–53),³ but under his catholic sister Mary (1553–58) there was a dramatic change in policy.

MARIAN MARTYRS

It is not known with any certainty how many heretics were burnt during Mary's reign. Writing in 1583, Lord Burghley gave a figure of 400 (including those who had died whilst in prison or from torture), but Bishop Burnett later estimated the number as 284; and the historian John Strype, using contemporary documents found in Cecil's papers, put the total of those burnt as 288 'besides those that died of famine in sundry prisons'.⁴ According to Strype's analysis by counties, no Staffordshire heretics were burnt at Lichfield but two from Warwickshire were in 1555 and a further Warwickshire heretic in 1557. The number of burnings which took place at Coventry is low compared to the figure for London and other places in the south-east of the country, despite the hard-line reputation of Bishop Ralph Baynes (1554–58), who in 1558 declared his diocese of Coventry and Lichfield to be entirely free of heretics.

LAURENCE SAUNDERS

One of the first heretics to be condemned in Mary's reign, in February 1555, was Laurence Saunders.⁵ He had intended to be a merchant but turned to religion instead whilst a student at King's College, Cambridge, and under Edward VI he was a highly respected divinity lecturer at Lichfield cathedral. After a short spell as rector of Church Langton (Leics.), he became rector of All Hallows' church, Bread Street, London, and it was there that he claimed that in the eucharist there was not the true and natural body and blood of Jesus Christ. That declaration was sufficient for the bishop of London, Edmund Bonner, to have him denounced as a heretic, although he at first tried hard to get Saunders to recant. Handed over to the secular arm in London, Saunders was then dispatched to Coventry where he was burnt in a small park outside the city.⁶

1 S. McSheffrey and N. Tanner, *Lollards of Coventry, 1486–1512* (Camden Society, 5th ser. 2003).

2 *Ibid.* nos. 99–1012.

3 A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (1964), 267.

4 J. Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials of the Reigns of King Henry VIII, King Edward VI, and Queen Mary I* (1816 edition), V, 292ff.; VII, 416–19.

5 *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 49, 45.

6 Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials*, IV, 303, 343.

ROBERT GLOVER

A well-educated gentleman, having attended Eton and King's College, Cambridge, Glover lived with his wife and family in the manor house at Mancetter (Warws.),⁷ and was influenced by the teaching of Bishop Hugh Latimer, who retired to Warwickshire after he was deprived of his bishopric in 1553.⁸ Declared a heretic at a visitation by Bishop Ralph Baynes in 1555, Glover was sent to Lichfield for further examination and in a later letter to his wife he described how, with other prisoners, he was dispatched on horseback, arriving at Lichfield in the late afternoon. They stayed at the Swan Inn where they were 'entertained friendly and gently'. After supper Glover was handed over to a man named Jephcot, a servant of the diocesan chancellor, Dr Anthony Draycot, who like Baynes had a reputation for being hard on heretics. Jephcot put Glover in the 'church prison', a narrow stone room 'very cold [and] with little light'. Although given a bundle of straw, he was not at first allowed a bed or a chair but officials later relented and he was allowed a bed. Questioned by Draycot and then held until Baynes returned to Lichfield, Glover in due course appeared before the consistory court which met in a room near the prison cell. Pronounced by the court as 'a proud, arrogant heretic', he was returned to Coventry where he was burned alive at the stake along with another heretic, Cornelius Dungey, a Coventry capper.⁹

Latimer's Swiss servant Augustine Bernher helped prisoners such as Glover by providing relief, carrying letters, and overseeing the widows and children of the deceased, and in his last letter to his wife, Glover advised her to take Bernher's advice and flee.¹⁰

JOYCE LEWIS

Like Robert Glover, Joyce Lewis is commemorated in a 19th-century tablet in Mancetter church.¹¹ The daughter of Thomas Curzon of Coxall (Staffs.), she married secondly into the strongly Catholic Lewis family of Mancetter (Warws.) and was influenced not only by her neighbour John Glover but also by Bishop Latimer who was her uncle.¹² When interrogated for heresy in 1555, she refused to recant her beliefs and was sent to Lichfield for burning. The secular authorities there, however, seem to have been reluctant to carry out the order, and the sheriff (Nicholas Bird) and the two bailiffs (Simon Biddulph and Humphrey Lowe) arranged for their wives to comfort Lewis as best they could.¹³ Nevertheless she was duly burnt in 1555, the only 16th-century victim to suffer that fate at Lichfield.

THE PRISON

Alleged heretics needed to be held safely until they either abjured and had served a penance or were handed over to the secular arm for burning. Robert Glover's letter to his wife shows that the 'church prison' was close to the consistory court on the south side side of the cathedral towards its east end: it was narrow, strong, cold, and dark. This confirms Thomas Harwood's report that three tiny vaults beneath the small chapels on the south side of the choir had been used as a prison, although at the time that he was writing in the early 19th century they were filled up with rubbish and an outside door was blocked.¹⁴ These vaults can still be seen below the level of the Lady Chapel, and have stone floors with a pointed tunnel roof. High on the wall of each cell is a narrow, unglazed double window, 5 inches wide and 22 inches tall, although on the outside the bottom of each window is at ground level. It is probable that the cells used as a prison in the 16th century were the same as the 'lower vault of [the revestry of God's House] ... under the church', where about 1660 three women squatted with their illegitimate children when the cathedral and its close were in a ruined and desecrated condition following the civil war.¹⁵

7 *Oxford DNB*. 22, 498–9.

8 Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials*, IV, 397.

9 T. Harwood, *History and Antiquities of the Church and City of Lichfield* (Gloucester, 1806), 285ff.

10 Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials*, IV, 236.

11 *Oxford DNB*. 33, 633.

12 *VCH Staffs*. III, 46.

13 Bodleian Library, Oxford, Harleian MS. 421, f. 70v.

14 Harwood, *History and Antiquities of Lichfield*, 96.

15 N. J. Tringham, 'Two seventeenth-century surveys of Lichfield cathedral close', *Transactions of the South Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society*, XXV (1985), 49 (nos. 58–9).

PERRY BARR AND ITS WATER MILLS

P. W. KING

Now a district in the north of the City of Birmingham, Perry Barr was formerly in Staffordshire and lay on eastern edge of the Black Country. In the parish of Handsworth, but separated from the manor of Handsworth by the river Tame, Perry Barr was within the area where waterpower was intensively used for industrial purposes, particularly in connection with the iron manufacture.

The existing published accounts of water mills in the Perry Barr area (F. W. Hackwood's *Handsworth: Old and New*, the *Victoria County History*, and David Dilworth's *Tame Mills of Staffordshire*) were prepared before the Gough collection in Birmingham City Archives became available.² As a result, they are unsatisfactory. Dilworth's work may devote slightly more space to the mills than the *Victoria County History*, but actually adds little. The difficulty faced by the authors of the two latter works was that they were largely based on deeds in the Birmingham and Meath-Baker Collections in Birmingham City Archives, but not the Gough Collection.³ This meant that their accounts are based only on the documents of the Wyrley family, and without those of the Gough family and of the Stanford family who preceded the Goughs. This article relies on a wider range of archives. Its object is to provide a more satisfactory account, making use of the Gough Collection and certain other archives. The opportunity will also be taken to make remarks about the manor of Perry Barr and certain other matters.

Perry Barr was a manor that incorporated two Domesday manors: Perry and Little Barr (or Barr Parva). By the late medieval period both belonged to the earls of Warwick and were administered as a single manor known as Perry Barr,⁴ though passing references to Little Barr can be found later, usually as an alternative name for Perry Barr.⁵ A couple of 15th-century manor rolls survive, in which 'Parva Bar' and 'Pery' are named as if they are separate townships in the same manor.⁶ It is therefore probable that distinction between Little Barr and Perry was forgotten, rather than that Little Barr was deserted, as has been suggested.⁷ The manor passed from the earls of Warwick to the Crown in the late 15th century. Henry VIII sold it in 1514 to Sir Andrew Noel, who sold it two years later to William Staunford and William Wyrley, each buying a half.⁸ In 1550 the two new lords of the manor partitioned most of the extensive demesne lands of the manor between them, but left undivided the manorial rights, a corn mill in the tenure of Richard Lyton, a 'blome smythie' in the tenure of William Wyrley, and certain other property.⁹ The Stanford share was sold in 1658 to Richard Best,¹⁰ and again in 1670 to Sir Henry Gough.¹¹ The Wyrley share passed down that family and through daughters into the Birch family, who retained their share of the manorial rights until 1849 when Wyrley Birch sold his share to the trustees of Sir John Gough's will, thus after three centuries re-uniting the manor in a single ownership.¹² However, stripped of the demesne lands partitioned in 1550, the manor itself was only of modest value. Before their acquisition of the manor, both William Staunford and William Wyrley had property in the area. The Wyrleys had owned

1 F. W. Hackwood, *Handsworth: Old and New: a history of Birmingham's Staffordshire suburb* (1908), 21–3; *Victoria County History* [hereafter *VCH*], *Warwickshire*, VII (1964), 253–69; D. Dilworth, *Tame Mills of Staffordshire* (Phillimore, Chichester 1976). The 'Mills' section of *VCH* was completed in 1957, with minor additions up to 1961.

2 The Gough collection (now called MS 3145) was deposited with Birmingham City Archives [hereafter *BCA*] in 1959, but was not fully catalogued until 1974. It is cited here as 'Gough' without further prefix.

3 Deeds from the Birmingham Collection in Birmingham City Archives came to the City Library from a variety of sources. They usually have a six-digit number, and are cited by that number without further description.

4 *VCH Warws.* VII, 70.

5 For example in a mortgage dated 1658 and a settlement dated 1704 'Parry Barre' and 'Parva Barre' are treated as alternative names for the same manor: Gough 62/3 and 134.

6 Public Record Office [hereafter *PRO*], DL 30/111/1674 dated 26 March 1460; DL 30/111/1679 is another such court roll. The inclusion of these among the manor rolls of the Duchy of Lancaster is anomalous, as Perry Barr was never parcel of the Duchy. However, another membrane of DL 30/111/1674 concerns Newcastle-under-Lyme, which was part of the Duchy.

7 P. V. Bate and D. M. Palliser, 'Suspected Lost Village sites in Staffordshire', *TSSAHS*, XII (1971), 34. They place desertion as before 1377. Cf. *VCH Warws.* VII, 24 70.

8 *VCH Warws.* VII, 70.

9 Gough 40/1.

10 Gough 62/3

11 Gough 62/5a–5b. The dates given here differ slightly from those given by *VCH*, being taken from the original deeds, whereas the *VCH* largely relied on fines and recoveries carried out subsequently to complete the title.

12 Gough 147.

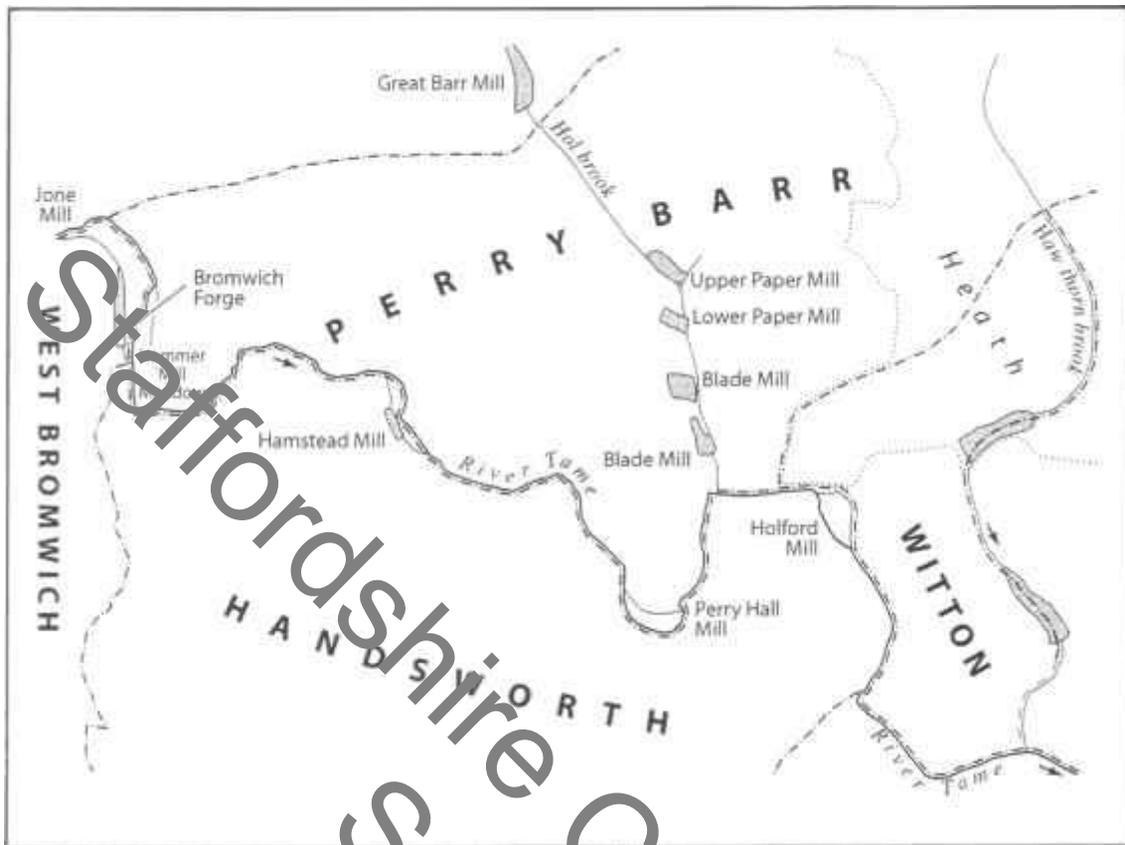


Figure 1 The locations of mills

Hamstead Hall since the 14th century,¹³ whereas a few months before his purchase of half the manor of Perry Barr, William Staunford had bought something called the manor of Purrey Hall [now Perry Hall], probably merely a freehold farm of 140 acres with a hall.¹⁴ It was probably not a manor in the strict sense of the term, in that there is no evidence of manorial tenants, nor for that matter was Hamstead Hall a manor house, though both halls became such (in effect) upon the 1546 purchase. There may well have been a medieval manor house or even two. One was perhaps the scite of the manor of Hamstead' where Thomas Wirley was directed to abate an encroachment in 1583,¹⁵ and the other perhaps at Mote Meadow, which was on the west of the Hol brook between the second and third mills up it.¹⁶ One of these may have been occupied by John Lowe, who was the farmer (that is, the lessee) of the manor of Perry Barr in 1506.¹⁷ This was perhaps 'the scite of the manor called Purrey Hall Garratts', which is mentioned in the 1704 Wyrley settlement.¹⁸

A major difficulty concerning the mills relates to the respective identities of the four mills on the Hol brook, and none of the previous accounts adequately resolved this. The nomenclature is confusing, since the name Perry is used for no less than five mills (see fig. 1), the four on the Hol brook and a fifth on the river Tame a little below Perry Hall. They were sometimes known by personal names, such as Harvey's mill, but these were usually those of current or recent occupiers, and occupiers change periodically. At other times, they were distinguished by names relating to their use, but these uses also changed occasionally, making the names obsolete. The difficulty is slightly alleviated by much later references to mills as having been formerly the Upper and Lower Paper Mills. (To avoid confusion they will here at times be referred to by numbering them upwards from the confluence of the Hol brook with the river Tame.) The failure of previous authors to distinguish

13 *VCH Warws.* VII, 69.

14 Gough 62/1; *VCH Warws.* VII, 71.

15 Gough 62/10a.

16 Staffordshire Record Office [hereafter SRO], D.1237/40, plan enclosed in deed (reproduced here as fig. 3).

17 PRO, SC 6/HenVII/1334 [minister's accounts].

18 Gough 134.

succeeded by his son Thomas. These matters have been dealt with elsewhere,⁹³ and do not need to be dealt with here on detail, beyond noting that the Perry ironworks was in this period part of a large enterprise. However, that does not explain where the furnace and forge respectively were.

The references to forges at West Bromwich and Wednesbury are obviously to the well-known Bromwich and Wednesbury (or Wedgbury) Forges, which remained part of the enterprise until sold by Philip Foley to Humfrey Jennens in 1676.⁹⁴ The furnace from which Whorwood was expelled on 8 July belonged to both lords of Perry Barr, and must therefore have been at or adjoining one of the two lowest mills on the Hol brook. As the second mill was a corn mill in 1616, with nothing to indicate that it was newly built (rather the reverse), Perry Furnace is likely to have succeeded a blade mill at the lowest mill. However, as already shown, there was a blade mill on that site by 1614. As mentioned earlier, there was a dispute in 1806 when the tenant of Holford Mill (on the river Tame) raised his weir, thus backing up water into the tail of the Lower Wire Mill. The closeness of its tail to river level must have hindered its operation when the Tame flooded. For a wire mill, that would be a mere temporary inconvenience, but for a blast furnace it would be much worse. A blast furnace operates continuously for a campaign lasting not less than several months, during which time the furnace must continuously receive blast from its bellows.⁹⁵ Instances can be found of men being employed to tread the waterwheel in dry summers to keep the blast going; the ironmaster no doubt hoped that this expensive expedient would be a temporary one, pending the arrival of rain to refill the furnace pond.⁹⁶ The problem of a flood of the Tame preventing waste-water from escaping the tail would be much less easily solved, and provides an explanation for the furnace being closed and replaced by a blade mill before 1614.

There are other candidates for furnace sites, but neither fits the description of the 1597 ownership of Perry Furnace. When Holford Mill was let in 1654, the tenants were granted the 'appurtenances, which it had had when a furnace or ironwork in the holding of Thomas Foley'.⁹⁷ However, this site is on the river Tame, where it is likely to have been subject to flooding. This makes it an improbable site for a furnace. The flooding of a furnace is extremely dangerous, as any water entering the hearth of a furnace immediately turns to steam, and this causes the furnace to explode. Furthermore, Holford Mill was described as a hammer mill at various dates between 1591 and 1614,⁹⁸ and (though not strictly in Perry Barr) was evidently Perry Forge and probably remained a forge until the 1650s. Indeed, Whorwood had to amend his proceedings, having evidently mistakenly thought that it was in Perry Barr.⁹⁹ Such a site on the main river would be quite suitable for a forge, such as Perry Forge, which had two fineries, a chafery (with a total of three sets of bellows), and a hammer, and would have required at least four waterwheels. The reference to Holford Mill as a furnace has caused considerable confusion among historians, and, it is suggested here, was a contemporary mistake.¹⁰⁰ The third site with indications of the presence of a furnace is that of the Upper Paper Mill. The reference to a 'Furnice Meadow' adjoining this has already been cited.¹⁰¹ It is suggested that a furnace was built there to replace the unsatisfactory one at the lower mill. If this was so, it probably only enjoyed a relatively short life, as the practice grew up in the succeeding period of having the furnace and forge some miles apart, and of having two forges per furnace rather than the same number of each.¹⁰² This fits with the chronology of the paper mills, at least one of which

93 P. W. King, 'The Development of the Iron Industry in south Staffordshire in the 17th century: history and myth', *TSAF* XXXVIII (1999), 65–8.

94 Herefs. RO, E12/VI/KG/1–22 etc.; R.G. Schafer, 'Structure and Genesis of the Foley "Ironworks in Partnership" of 1692', *Business History*, 13(1) (1971), 29.

95 For details of blast furnace operation, see H. R. Schubert, *History of the British Iron and Steel Industry from c. 450 B.C. to A.D. 1775* (1957), especially 231–45.

96 For an example of treading the waterwheel see D. Crossley and R. Savile (eds.), *The Fuller Letters: Guns, Slaves, and Finance* (Sussex Rec. Soc. 76, for 1988 and 1989), nos. 513, 516.

97 BCA, 252214.

98 BCA, 276768; 276767.

99 PRO, STAC 5/W27/22.

100 The use of the name Perry for something that was not in Perry Barr might seem anomalous, but I have come across several cases where the name used for an ironworks was not quite appropriate to its actual location. This happens where a furnace and forge share a name which is strictly appropriate only to one of them. In this case, the presence of Perry Bridge on the road between them may have encouraged the use of that name. For example, Chartley Forge was actually in Gratwich: William Yates, *Map of Staffordshire* (1773), but it belonged to the owner of Chartley Castle: Herefs. RO, E12/VI/MCc/1.

101 See note 72.

102 P. W. King, 'The Iron Trade in England and Wales 1500–1815: the Charcoal Iron Industry and its Transition to Coke' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Wolverhampton University, 2003), 93–7.

existed about 1648.¹⁰³ Bromwich Furnace similarly closed in the 1630s, leaving Bromwich Forge to continue in use until the early 19th century. The ironworks at Holford Mill (probably Perry Forge) also closed in this period. It was let to William Edwards and John Crooley, grinders, as a blade mill of two bays of buildings ‘erected and erecting’. Edwards was still in the occupation in 1667, but the mill’s history for the next century and more is unclear.¹⁰⁴

BLOOMSMITHIES

Before the furnace and forge, there was a bloomsmithy. This (along with the corn mill) was left undivided in the 1550 partition. It was in the tenure of William Wirley in 1550. As a ‘brannes-methye’, it had been operated for him in 1543 by Henry Grove. Grove was to ‘serve [Wyrley] at the smethye in the conce of a brennier and well and sufficiently to work all such iron as [Wyrley] shuld have ther to be wrought made blomyd or forgyd for one hole yere’, and was to be paid 4*d* for every ‘branne’; but Grove allowed it to burn down one night.¹⁰⁵ This was certainly a predecessor of one of the two lower mills on the Hol brook. Of the two, the lowest mill is perhaps the most likely, but it is not clear when it was replaced by a furnace.

The hammer mill at Holford was, however, not the only one in the area. There was a Hammer Mill Meadow in Perry Barr, upstream of Hamstead Mill (and Bridge). Although not far downstream of Bromwich Forge in West Bromwich, it was probably too far from it for the reference to be to that forge. The leat to Bromwich Forge seems to have begun life by supplying a corn mill (Jone Mill), further upstream. The new leat to Bromwich Forge (made in 1593 or 1594) was apparently an extension of this, and Jone Mill was closed.¹⁰⁶ Maps show a leat running across the meadows towards Hammer Mill Meadow, but the intake for this must have been upstream of where the tail-race from Bromwich Forge joined the Tame, though below Jone Mill. Bromwich Forge and that hammer mill cannot therefore have co-existed. It is conceivable that this was the bloomsmithy belonging to the two lords of Perry Barr in 1550, but it is more likely to have belonged to some one else. Unfortunately the site was covered by colliery waste and has since been landscaped as part of the Sandwell Valley Nature Reserve of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. The site is now covered by a lake, and it is not clear whether there may be any archaeological remains.

Another hammer mill was mentioned in complicated proceedings following the death in 1548 of William Cokes of Handsworth and these give its history. It was part of messuage and over 200 acres of land which John Botetourt of Weoley Castle had granted (as lord of Handsworth) to John Cokes in 1351. This estate allegedly descended successively to Richard, Thomas, and William Cokes until the death of the latter in 1548, though this seems to be too few generations. William built two cottages and two mills, a corn mill, and an iron mill called a hammer myll. Richard Cokes had in 1454 given a messuage called Boyshall and other property to Thomas Cokes and Gillia, his wife. William had granted this property to feoffees in 1495, and there was a further feoffment in 1514, granting it after his death to his son Thomas; but Thomas predeceased his father leaving a son William who was aged 4 years 22 weeks and 2 days at his grandfather’s death. Thomas’ widow Ellen claimed that there had been a further settlement in favour of Thomas and herself in 1532 and that she and her new husband Henry Grove should have the property in her right, but this was still in dispute in 1553.¹⁰⁷ From this information, it appears probable that the hammer mill was built at the end of the 15th or in the early 16th century. It was in Handsworth not Perry Barr, as indicated by the 1551 grant by John Botetourt as lord of Handsworth. Its location is not known, but it is unlikely to have preceded any later mills on the river Tame.¹⁰⁸ This suggests that it was on Hockley brook, perhaps being a predecessor of Pig Mill.¹⁰⁹

103 BCA, 181865.

104 BCA, Meath-Baker 144.

105 PRO, C 1/1170/101.

106 Dilworth, *Tame Mills*, 41; John Izon, ‘A Handsworth case’; PRO, STAC 5/P4/13.

107 PRO, C 43/4/27 [Common law proceedings in Chancery]; cf. C 43/4/9.

108 Hamstead and Holford Mills belonged to the Wyrley family. Perry Hall Mill was in the manor of Perry Hall (see above). Stanton’s Mill was in Witton in 1737; Hackwood, *Handsworth*, 23–4.

109 *VCH Warws.* VII, 258 implies that the Soho Manufactory was built on a previously unused site. However, this might be a candidate for the mill of ‘Hurfford’ or ‘Hurfford’ (belonging to the lord of the manor), which is referred to in 1227/8 and 1393/4; Gough 16/3–4. The latter is after John de Botetourt’s grant to Roger of Wyrley of licence to make sluices for a fulling mill at Holford: *VCH Warws.* VII, 255.

CONCLUSION

The careful use of deeds and other documents has enabled the identities and histories of about five mills in Perry Barr to be sorted out. It has also thrown light on a number of other matters, notably the probable location of several ironworks, including a late 16th century forge and a blast furnace (or even two). These were preceded by hammer mills, used in connection with an earlier ironmaking process. Nevertheless, gaps remain in what is known, both in the occupation of some of the mills in the 17th century and in the precise dates of the various 15th- and 16th-century ironworks. However, the documents that would enable these gaps to be filled do not survive.

In the 16th and 17th centuries Perry Barr was essentially a rural community, with a variety of different industrial mills. The ironworks disappeared due to rationalisation in that industry. They were followed by a fulling mill and paper mills. In the 18th century these were altered to blade mills and wire mills to serve the expanding metal manufacturing industries of Birmingham and the Black Country. In addition, there was a change in the trades using the blade mills between the 17th and 18th centuries; this reflects the decline of the Birmingham's old cutlery industry (in the face of competition from Sheffield), and the rise of armament production, so that swordcutlers dominated among occupiers in the late 18th century. Corn mills were still needed to make flour to feed people; Hamstead Mill and Perry Hall Mill remained corn mills throughout, and two of the Hol brook mills were converted to corn mills after the Napoleonic War. The final demise of the mills has not always been traced. Most seem to have remained in use until the mid 19th century, but they eventually went out of use due to availability of new sources of power and the need of the people of Birmingham for water.

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